



Representative

FRED JARRETT

41ST DISTRICT



2001 Mid Session Report

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Dear Neighbors:

We are now nearing the end of the 2001 Legislative session. To say that my first session as your state representative has been interesting would be a major understatement! Whether working on creating solutions to our transportation problems, or dealing with the challenge of regrouping after the 6.8 magnitude earthquake, this session has been extraordinary.

Hearing from you has been extremely helpful as we work through thousands of bills. I especially appreciate the efforts of those who took the time to respond to the survey I sent out in January. I am astounded by the time you take to help me understand how state actions affect our neighborhoods. Your phone calls, e-mails, letters, and hotline messages make a difference in helping me to better represent you.

This mid-session report highlights the budget process and the response to my survey.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments on these, or any other issues of importance to you.

Sincerely,

Fred Jarrett
State Representative
41st District

2001 - 2003 OPERATING BUDGET

Our state has three major budgets: operating, capital and transportation. The budgets are enacted for a two-year cycle, beginning on July 1 of each odd-numbered year. Largest of the three budgets is the operating budget.

The budget process began with the governor introducing his proposal in December, then the Democrat controlled Senate introduced its proposal, and the House will introduce their version soon. The final plan will be refined significantly in the next few weeks.

At this point, I am concerned that the Senate budget proposal is not sustainable. One reservation stems from the optimism in the revenue projections. Our economy has slowed down significantly in the past year and we must be certain that we can continue to support important ongoing program operating costs. Should our economy continue to weaken, we would fall short.

Further, the Senate budget is balanced by one-time revenue transfers, including investment gains from pension funds. Neither the source nor the character of those transfers appears appropriate.

On the expenditure side, the Senate proposal is just as challenging. It restores some of the governor's cuts and requires lifting the Initiative 601 spending limits.

Given the 49-49 partisan split in the House, the near split of the Senate membership and the difficulty of the choices, the remainder of the session will be just as interesting as the first weeks.



FINDING SOLUTIONS TO
OUR TRANSPORTATION CONGESTION MESS

We are still in the process of drafting a transportation budget. I remain firmly committed to crafting a budget that gets us moving forward toward solving our traffic problems. The response I received from the survey questions about the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation’s recommendations for improving our transportation system was clear. First and foremost was the directive to get busy and begin action today to improve our system - and secondly, that many of you are willing to share in the cost of improvements.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

I am pleased that the Legislature has recognized the importance of measurable results for government. In the past few years we have seen policy enacted that includes clear benchmarks and accountability measurement in education, human services and other areas of government. Transportation is an area that is long overdue for performance measurements.

Survey respondents made perfectly clear that accountability and measurable results are extremely important in our transportation system. Any transportation plan we adopt must have benchmarks establishing goals and performance measures for each step along the way. We must hold the Department of Transportation and other transportation providers accountable for their performance by linking future funding to agency performance.

SURVEY RESULTS

I thought you would appreciate seeing the results of the survey. We received over a thousand responses, more than half with comments, explanations and suggestions. Many of the questions came from the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation recommendations – the same recommendations the Legislature must consider.

The state’s voter-approved spending limit
(I-601) should be:

- Maintained as is - 50%
- Amended to reflect increased spending mandated by initiatives - 28%
- Amended to allow spending to increase as higher rate - 22%

Do you agree or disagree that I-601 should be
amended to exclude salary increases for school
employees mandated by I-732?

Agree - 47% Disagree - 53%

Top three areas supported for spending cuts to
help balance the budget:

1. Social services
2. Natural resources
3. Health care

Top three measures supported to raise additional
revenue for transportation:

1. Gas tax increase
2. Weight-based user fees, applied to all private vehicles
3. Indexing the gas tax to inflation

Top five Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation
recommendations supported:

1. Begin action to improve the transportation system
 2. Direct a performance review of DOT
 3. Transfer 90 percent of ferry operating cost to those who use it
 4. Use the private sector to deliver projects & services
 5. Guarantee 85 percent return on state transportation taxes to region
- (tie) Make maintenance, preservation & safety funding priorities

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